

Public Library District of Columbia
MIXED-USE REAL ESTATE PROJECTS POLICY

Background

Numerous unsolicited proposals have been presented to DCPL during the past few years for mixed-use real estate projects. In 2003, the “Sense of the Council in Favor of Mixed-Use Redevelopment of the District of Columbia Public Libraries Resolution of 2003” was presented. The resolution was defeated at the time based on an impending contract award for stand-alone facilities; however, the City recognized the value of and has encouraged mixed-use projects where appropriate, most notably in the Library Enhancement Act of 2005.

Policy Statement

Insuring the delivery of quality library services to the community is the primary focus when renovating or rebuilding branch libraries. While the Board of Library Trustees acknowledges the potential value of mixed-use projects, at this time DCPL will not solicit mixed-use project. However, it will evaluate unsolicited proposals from other city agencies as well as private developers where there is demonstrated community interest and potential benefits to both DCPL and the community. A number of considerations will be part of any decision by the Library to participate in a proposed mixed-use development.

Definition

Mixed-use real estate projects as used in this policy include both public/private partnerships and public/public partnerships. The District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (“DCMR”) Title 11 Chapter 6, §600.1 describes “Mixed Use District” as Commercial Residential (CR) which shall encourage diversity of compatible land uses that may include a mixture of residential, office, retail, recreational, light industrial and other miscellaneous uses.

DCPL further requires that a mixed-use real estate project involve “the close collaboration of public entities or a public entity(s) and private entity(s) to structure, negotiate and implement the development, finance, design, construction and operation of a facility”. The project must integrate the vision and mission of DCPL and be more beneficial to DCPL and the specific community than if DCPL proceeded to build a stand alone library.

Project Requirements

The following requirements must be considered when evaluating each proposed mixed-use project:

- Opportunities must exist for community input and there must be evidence of strong community support.

- The missions of the party (ies) must be compatible and insure the integrity of the library system.
- Significant cost savings or other tangible benefits to DCPL must be associated with the proposed project.
- Projects consisting of “only” the library and a school must be assessed in terms of the compatibility of services, programs, policies, collections and hours that are often difficult to reconcile. Although the educational roles are complementary, short-term temporary arrangements may be more viable.
- The proposed project must meet the defined space requirements for DCPL programs, services, collections and parking.
- Library’s visibility must be guaranteed, including a prominent first floor location.
- Single floor facilities are strongly preferred
- Library services, technology and space must be accessible to all patrons during the hours of operation unless in use for special library-sponsored programs
- Participating in a mixed-use project must not add significant construction delays

Other Considerations

Other factors that will be considered when determining if a mixed-use real estate project proposal will enhance the position of DCPL are:

- DCPL’s ability to realize its mission through partnering with complimentary entities.
- Ownership structure and management of the mixed-use project.
- The financial and other benefits that will accrue to DCPL where the facility is built on land controlled by DCPL.
- The net benefits accruing to DCPL if relocation is required
- The potential for attracting “non-traditional” and otherwise hard to reach library customers
- Benefits to the community provided by a joint-use project, i.e. affordable housing; neighborhood stores, cultural resources, etc.

Conclusion

DCPL has the right to receive, review and explore opportunities for mixed-use development based on the stated program requirements and other considerations as set forth in this document. The Board of Trustees will be informed of such opportunities and will provide appropriate guidance to ensure that the library system and the community receive the greatest possible benefit from the collaboration between DCPL and the development partner.